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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCCT-01 DHA-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 ACDA-07 SAJ-01

SAM-01 EB-07 ERDA-05 OES-06 /113 W

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R 241609Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7885

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 13356

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UNGA, SHUM, GW, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET ATTITUDES ON TERRORISM AND FRG UNGA INITIATIVE

REF: STATE 196812

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN CAUGHT BETWEEN THEIR
DISLIKE OF TERRORISM AND THEIR UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE CONCRETE
STEPS AGAINST IT WHICH THEIR FRIENDS AMONG ARAB AND OTHER
THIRD WORLD STATES AND THE "NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT"
OPPOSE. WHILE DISCREET SMALL STEPS ARE NOT EXCLUDED, INITIATIVES
ON THE TERRORISM ISSUE HAVE A BETTER CHANCE OF
GAINING SOVIET SUPPORT IF THEY CAN BE SEPARATED AS MUCH AS
POSSIBLE FROM THE HIGHLY CHARGED ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE. THE
GERMAN PROPOSAL IS NOT, IT SEEMS TO US, THE KIND WHICH DIVORCES
THE TWO, AND HENCE, HAS FEW PROSPECTS OF GARNERING SOVIET ASSENT.
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THE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING COMMON GROUND WITH THE SOVIETS ON THE

TERRORISM ISSUE ARE ENORMOUS, BUT THERE MAY BE SOME VALUE IN DISCUSSING WITH THEM THE ISSUE OF NUCLEAR TERRORISM. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SOVIETS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNEASY ABOUT THE USE OF TERRORISM AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT, BUT THEY HAVE QUALIFIED THIS DISTASTE TO ACCOMMODATE ITS USE IN EXTREMIS, AND THIS LEADS TO PROBLEMS OF DEFINING THE PERMISSIBLE. THUS, IT IS DIFFICULT FOR THEM EITHER TO ACCEPT OR REJECT AS TERRORISM CERTAIN EXTREMIST ACTS BY OTHERWISE ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS LIKE THE PALESTINIANS'. FURTHER COMPLICATING THE MATTER, THE SOVIETS HAVE RECENTLY ADDED THE CONCEPT OF "STATE TERRORISM", SUCH AS THE ISRAELI ENTEBBE OPERATION, WHICH IN EARLIER TIMES MIGHT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED AN ACT OF WAR OR OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.

2. SOVIET DISTASTE FOR TERRORISM THEREFORE NEITHER EXCLUDES NOR IMPLIES WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL IT. THE SOVIETS MAKE JUDGMENTS ON SPECIFIC CASES, BEING LENIENT WITH FRIENDS AND STRICT AGAINST OPPONENTS, GENERALLY THEY LIMIT THEMSELVES TO COMMENTARY. FURTHERMORE, THE ISSUE HAS BECOME INEXTRICABLY INVOLVED WITH THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AND THE PASSIONS OF THE ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT. UNABLE TO SEPARATE THE ISSUES AND UNWILLING TO LOSE SUPPORT IN THE REGION, THEIR POLICY IN MULTINATIONAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN LARGELY "IMMOBILISM". IN BILATERAL TREATMENT OF THE TOPIC, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE HAD LESS DIFFICULTY IN DEALING WITH RESTRICTED ASPECTS OF TERRORISM (E.G., AGREEMENTS WITH IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN ON HIJACKING), PROBABLY BECAUSE OF THE LESSER IMPACT ON OTHER ISSUES, AND BECAUSE OF CONCRETE ADVANTAGES TO BE GAINED WITH RESPECT TO DEFECTORS.

3. IN PUBLIC THE SOVIETS ARE CONSISTENT IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO TERRORISM AS THEY DEFINE IT. IN ADDITION TO "STATE TERRORISM" THEY INCLUDE TAKING HOSTAGES, HIJACKING, AND TERRORISM WHICH USES "POLITICAL BLACKMAIL" OR "FINANCIAL EXTORTION". MOST RECENTLY, THEY HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER MOVEMENTS WHICH MAY TRY IN THE FUTURE TO USE NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL (SEE MOSCOW 12628). EVEN THEIR OWN ESCAPING REFUGEES MAY QUALIFY AS TERRORISTS SHOULD THE ESCAPE ATTEMPT RESULT IN VIOLENCE IN WHICH INNOCENT PEOPLE OR OFFICIALS ARE INJURED OR KILLED.

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4. PRIVATELY, THE SOVIETS HAVE ALSO BEEN CONSISTENT IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO TERRORISM. THE LATEST AND MOST SIGNIFICANT EXPRESSION CAME IN GROMYKO'S CONVERSATION WITH SAUVAGNARGUES (MOSCOW 11449). AT THE SAME TIME, GROMYKO SIGNALLED THE DILEMMA THE ISSUE PRESENTS TO THE SOVIETS, BY INSISTING THAT A CONVENTION ON TERRORISM HAD TO GO BEYOND MERE CONDEMNATION AND CONTROL AND ADDRESS SOCIAL CAUSES AND MIDDLE EAST POLITICS.

5. ANOTHER ELEMENT EXPLAINING SOVIET RELUCTANCE TO DEAL WITH THE ISSUE MULTINATIONALLY IS A SINCERE SUSPICION THAT WESTERN STATES ARE INTERESTED ONLY IN CONDEMNING TERRORISM OF WHICH THEY ARE THE OBJECT. SINCE MOST OF THIS TERRORISM ORIGINATES IN THE THIRD WORLD AND AMONG "NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS", THE SOVIETS, LOOKING OVER THEIR SHOULDER AT THE CHINESE, ARE NOT WILLING TO ENDANGER THEIR POSITION WITH THESE CURRENT OR PROSPECTIVE ALLIES BY APPEARING TO SIDE WITH THE WEST AGAINST THEM.

6. THE FRG EMBASSY IN MOSCOW HAS DISCUSSED THE GERMAN INITIATIVE WITH MFA DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER KORNIYENKO, AND RECEIVED WHAT IT CONSIDERS A "MILD" RESPONSE. IN VERY GENERAL TERMS, THE SOVIETS INDICATED AN INTEREST IN THE INITIATIVE BUT WISH TO SEE A TEXT BEFORE MAKING SPECIFIC COMMENTS OR REPLYING TO THE GERMAN REQUEST FOR SUPPORT. THEIR ONLY CRITICISM WAS THAT THE GERMAN INITIATIVE APPEARED TO BE TOO NARROWLY DRAWN; KORNIYENKO FELT THAT TERRORISM IS BROADER THAN THE HOSTAGE ISSUE. THE GERMANS CAME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THEY COULD COUNT ON SOVIET SUPPORT FOR THEIR INITIATIVE ONLY WITH SUBSTANTIAL QUALIFICATIONS, IF AT ALL.

7. WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT THE SOVIETS WILL NOT BE WILLING TO SUPPORT CONCRETE STEPS IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO STOP TERRORISM UNTIL THEY CAN DO SO WITHOUT SERIOUSLY THREATENING THEIR MIDDLE EAST POSITION. THIS MEANS THAT THEY OR SOMEONE ELSE WILL HAVE TO DEVISE MEANS TO DECOUPLE THE TWO ISSUES. FROM OUR LIMITED PERSPECTIVE, THE GERMAN INITIATIVE DOES NOT APPEAR TO DO SO. IN FACT, RESTRICTING THE ISSUE TO THE TAKING OF HOSTAGES SO SOON AFTER ENTEBBE DOES THE OPPOSITE. IT MAY BE THAT THE ISSUES ARE IN FACT INSEPARABLE, AT LEAST WHILE THE ARAB-ISRAEL DISPUTE GENERATES SUCH FIERCE PASSIONS. IF SO, WE THINK THE SOVIETS WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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PREPARED TO SIT TIGHT, RATHER THAN RISK ANY LOSSES FOR THE SAKE OF PROGRESS ON AN ISSUE WHOSE VIRULENCE TOUCHES THEM DIRECTLY, AS YET, ONLY ON RARE OCCASIONS.

8. WE DO THINK, HOWEVER, THAT THERE MAY BE MERIT IN EXPLORING WITH THE SOVIETS, POSSIBLY UNDER THE NON-PROLIFERATION RUBRIC, THE QUESTION OF A CONVENTION ON NUCLEAR TERRORISM. THIS ASPECT DOES NOT, THUS FAR, HAVE THE FATAL FLAW OF BEING INTWINED IN THE MIDDLE EASTERN AND NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. THE DEPARTMENT MAY THEREFORE WISH TO CONSIDER THE MERITS OF RAISING THE TOPIC WITH THE SOVIETS IN BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS PREPARATORY TO THE UNGA. STOESSEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, HUMAN RIGHTS, UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE, UNGA RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MOSCOW13356
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760323-0906
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760826/aaaaavqg.tel
Line Count: 166
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION IO
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 196812
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <23 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET ATTITUDES ON TERRORISM AND FRG UNGA INITIATIVE
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, GE, UR, UNGA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006